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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 000945

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [IS](#) [KPAL](#) [PTER](#) [FR](#)  
SUBJECT: MFA CONTACTS STRESS GOF POSITION ON HAMAS  
UNCHANGED IN LIGHT OF RUSSIAN INITIATIVE

REF: MOSCOW 1323

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor Bruce Turner, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[11](#). (C) In conversations with us February 13, senior MFA contacts stressed that the GoF position on Hamas remained unchanged and they downplayed press reports suggesting that the GoF had endorsed Russia's initiative to invite Hamas leaders to Moscow. MFA DAS-equivalent for Egypt/Levant Herv Besancenot suggested that press had taken February 10-statements by the MFA spokesman out of context (full text of February 10 remarks follows para 4). Besancenot stressed that the GoF position on HAMAS remained unchanged, that France had no contacts with Hamas, and that the GoF remained insistent on the three conditions which Hamas must meet as articulated in the January 30 Quartet statement: renunciation of violence, recognition of Israel, and recognition of past PLO accords with Israel.

[12](#). (C) MFA Cabinet Advisor for the Middle East Christophe Guilhou confirmed to us that Israeli FM Tzipi Livni called French FM Douste-Blazy February 11 to seek clarification of the French position on Hamas. Guilhou described Livni as reassured by her conversation with the French FM, who stressed that the GoF had not been notified of the Russian initiative in advance and reaffirmed the GoF's attachment to the Quartet conditions and the GoF's non-contact policy with Hamas. The French FM also reaffirmed to Livni the GoF view that Russia remained bound by the Quartet conditions as well. At the same time, Guilhou explained, Russia was not bound by the same contact restrictions which EU members faced with respect to Hamas, as, unlike the EU, Russia had not designated Hamas a terrorist group. In the GoF view, any effort by countries which maintained dialogue with Hamas, such as Russia and Egypt, to push Hamas towards accepting the Quartet conditions should not be discouraged, though the chances of success may be questionable. Guilhou added that Putin was no friend of Islamists and would not be likely to take a conciliatory line with respect to Hamas.

[13](#). (U) PM Villepin further clarified the GoF position on Hamas before embarking on a trip to Moscow February 13-14. Villepin declared, "Our position, and that of Europe in general is clear: to affirm the necessity for Hamas to engage in the path of peace, of rejection of violence, and of recognition of the state of Israel." Villepin added that although the EU had designated Hamas a terrorist group, "Russia is not in the same situation, which could give it additional latitude. If, by dialogue, in speedy conditions, Hamas is brought to engage in this path of rejection of violence, we could only welcome it."

[14](#). (U) The following is excerpted text of the MFA spokesman's comments on the Russian initiative on Hamas during the February 10 daily MFA press briefing:

Begin text:

Q- President Putin, who is in Madrid, has invited representatives of Hamas to go to Moscow for talks. The United States has already reacted. What's France's reaction, given that Hamas still appears on the EU's list of terrorist organizations?

A-In this we share with Russia the goal of moving Hamas towards positions which will allow us to reach the objective of having two states living in peace and security. In this perspective, France, the European Union and the Quartet have however laid down clear principles as the basis for starting a political dialogue with Hamas. I confirm that Hamas is still on the EU list of terrorist organizations.

Q-Don't you think that Russia should have consulted with its partners in the Quartet before launching such an initiative?

A-It's true that the initiative was taken without prior consultation with the partners, but provided that it is in the framework of the objectives and principles that we've set ourselves, we consider it an initiative that may contribute to advancing our positions.

Q-If an organization is on a terrorist blacklist, does being listed exclude dialogue?

A-That is indeed our position. That is why we ask that any eventual dialogue take place within the framework of the conditions we've set. You know what these conditions are, that Hamas renounce violence, recognize Israel, and accept the agreements concluded between the PLO and Israel, especially the Oslo agreements. So that is the context in

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which we could consider engaging with Hamas. That is the French position and it has been adopted by the EU and the Quartet.

Q-That means you're having no contacts on the ground with Hamas?

A-We have no official contacts with Hamas.

End text.

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Stapleton